



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

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For Immediate Release
Friday, January 20, 2006

Contact: Carol Guthrie
(202) 224-4515

BAUCUS URGES JAPAN TO CONTINUE BEEF TRADE WITH U.S. *Montana, U.S. Beef Remain Safest, Highest Quality Despite Recent Incident*

Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.), Ranking Member of the Senate Finance Committee, urged Japan to keep its border open to U.S. beef imports after a recent shipment of U.S. veal was found to contain a backbone. The backbone at issue is not at risk of carrying bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) because it was in beef less than 30 months old. However, the agreement between Japan and the United States, which led Japan to resume beef imports after a two-year ban, required backbones to be removed from shipments of U.S. beef.

“This inspection error is extremely disappointing, but nothing has happened to change the fact that U.S. beef is the safest, highest quality beef in the world,” said Baucus. **“The United States takes its responsibilities under its agreement with Japan seriously, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture is taking steps to ensure this one-time problem does not occur again. In the meantime, Montana and America continue to produce a safe, quality product that belongs on Japanese store shelves. Japan should continue accepting U.S. beef imports.”**

Japan originally closed its borders to U.S. beef following the discovery of a dairy cow with BSE in Washington state in December 2003. In December 2005, Japan lifted its ban following a ruling from that country’s Food Safety Commission (FSC) that U.S. beef carries no more risk of BSE than Japanese beef. Today, in response to the discovery of the backbone, Japan has suspended shipments of U.S. beef but has not reimposed the ban.

Baucus has been a leading opponent of beef bans imposed in Japan and elsewhere in Asia. Some Asian countries have taken action recently to lift their beef bans, including Thailand, South Korea, and, most recently, Singapore.

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